

Pickles = good food!

By MARY MCCLINTOCK

When I was growing up, I didn't think pickles qualified as "serious" food, they were just condiments at a barbecue or a snack. Pickles were a step up from potato chips, but not a big step. Now, however, I realize pickled vegetables are tasty, healthy and most definitely real food.

What helped me expand my thinking? The pickles and pickled vegetables created by our Franklin County neighbors and fabulous fermented food folks, Dan Rosenberg and Addie Rose Holland of Real Pickles in Greenfield. Many people in western Mass. appreciate the great food produced by Real Pickles.

And, even though the Real Pickles folks only distribute their products in the northeast, they're known nationally. For the second year in a row, Dan, Addie, and the rest of the Real Pickles' folks were honored for their Organic Garlic Dill Pickles at the Good Food Awards in San Francisco. The Good Food Awards aren't just for food that tastes good. The awards highlight outstanding American food producers who make food that is delicious and supports sustainability and social good.

As part of the award, Real Pickles was asked to recognize three members of their community who have contributed to the business' success. Dan acknowledged Atlas Farm and Riverland Farm, two farms who grow vegetables used by Real Pickles. Dan also appreciated the work done by Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) on raising community awareness in western Massachusetts about the benefits of buying local food.

Since I began focusing on eating locally grown food, I've really come to appreciate pickled vegetables. Dan said it well when he spoke at the Good Food Awards. He said, "Pickles are an essential food, one that can keep people eating nutritious fruits and vegetables from regional sources all year long, regardless of how cold the weather gets."

Want to know more about Real Pickles? Check out www.realpickles.com or look for them in area stores. I'm including a recipe featuring the award-winning Organic Garlic Dill Pickles as well as other ingredients available at the Greenfield Winter Farmers Market (see below). You can find more recipes at the Real Pickles website.

We are so fortunate to live in an area where lots of people grow great food and communities work together to care for each other. Hearing about Real Pickles receiving the award made me think that, and so did hearing about the two Winter Fare local food potlucks I didn't attend.

Marsha Stone emailed to say the Greenfield potluck included dishes ranging from Asian coleslaw and parsnip soup (the hit of the party) to butternut squash fries (from Marsha and Norm's garden), chevre and fig preserves. I hope to include the parsnip soup recipe in a future column.

Steve Damon said last year's Gill Local Food Potluck turned into a dessert potluck when everyone brought desserts. This year, Steve said "We had lots of main dishes, but NO DESSERTS! We improvised with French bread (donated by The Gill Tavern), topped with applesauce made from Clarkdale apples. Then, we spooned on some Turkey Ridge Farm honey. Yummy!"

Greenfield Winter Farmers Market, Saturday, March 3, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Second Congregational Church, Court Square, downtown Greenfield. Fresh locally grown vegetables, fruit, and processed food. For information, visit www.greenfieldfarmersmarket.com or contact Devon Whitney-Deal at devonwd@gmail.com or (413) 625-9907.

This week we're eating ...
Grilled Cheese with Garlic Dill Pickles, Bacon, & Onion
 By Dan Rosenberg and Addie Rose Holland of Real Pickles, Greenfield
 Makes 3 sandwiches

9 strips bacon, cooked
 3 halves Real Pickles' Organic Garlic Dill Pickles, sliced thinly lengthwise
 ¼ pound cheddar cheese, sliced
 ½ small onion, sliced thinly
 6 slices sourdough bread
 Butter for the skillet

Heat skillet with butter. Make three sandwiches with cheese, pickles, bacon and onion. Grill each sandwich over medium heat until golden brown. Flip and grill the other side, adding butter to skillet as needed.

Mary McClintock lives in Conway and has been a member of two CSA farms. She's a long-time vegetable gardener and member of a Franklin County local foods group. She has presented workshops on eating locally grown foods and is an organizer of the Free Harvest Supper. Send suggestions and recipes to: mmcclinto@yahoo.com



Blue Plate Special

A family affair: Davenport Maple Farm Restaurant

By TINKY DAKOTA WEISBLAT
 Special to The Recorder

With maple season looming, an annual pilgrimage for many Franklin County residents is about to get under way. Nothing beats a visit to a sugarhouse restaurant at this time of year to watch sap being boiled — and consume food made with fresh, hot syrup.

At Davenport Maple Farm, high on Tower Road in Shelburne, Norman Davenport and his wife Lisa are firing up their evaporator and airing out the restaurant, which is open only on weekends during maple season ... this year it will open on March 3.

The farm has been in the Davenport family for generations. "We're actually approaching our centennial," Lisa Davenport told me recently.

"Norman's great-grandfather, Walter Davenport, purchased the farm in 1913. There was always sugaring going on here prior to that. And they've always had cows here."

She noted that the restaurant, which opened in 1990, was the brainchild of her husband's father. At that point the family's old sugarhouse was in need of substantial repairs, and Russell Davenport and his wife Martha decided it was a good time to expand it into a restaurant.

Two decades later, the senior Davenports can still be found at the restaurant during maple season. Russ Davenport helps Norman run the evaporator and chats with customers, and Martha runs the cash register. Lisa and Norm's daughter Maegan runs the kitchen while daughter Daina serves as head waitress.

"Norm's sister Barbara Goodchild comes up and helps, too. It's really a family affair," said Lisa Davenport.

"I supervise everybody. I do all the ordering and the payroll, I go out and do the shopping, and I fill in for somebody when they stop working."

She admitted that while she is looking forward to maple season, she can also find the family's restaurant weekends intense.



Recorder/Peter MacDonald

Lisa Davenport stirs a batch of beans, flavored with maple syrup, in a crock pot.

"It's a short season, six weeks long, but you've got a couple of weeks beforehand when you're getting ready for it. There are some all-nighters. If the sap's really running, you've got to keep boiling."

She says that she sometimes sets her cell phone to wake her up in the morning only to hear it ring in her pocket at the end of a long night at the evaporator.

"And we still have the cows to milk and regular chores to do," she added. "It's a long schedule, but it's fun. You're right in the middle of it all the time."

Most visitors to the restaurant order breakfast, which is served all day, although the Davenports also offer lunch items, including hamburgers made from their own beef, corn chowder, maple baked beans, and grilled cheese.

Asked to sum up the farm's cuisine, Lisa Davenport said, "Good home cooking. We don't use any mixes; it's all made from scratch. I bake all the bread."

The most popular menu selection is probably the farm's Finnish pancakes ... or pan-nukakku, which are baked, rather than being cooked on a griddle.

"Personally, my morning starts with chocolate-chip waffles!"

Davenport Maple Farm Restaurant will be open this year on Saturdays and Sundays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. from March 3 through April 8. There is often a line at the door, although customers who arrive first thing in the morning or come on the first or last weekends are likely to be seated fairly quickly.

Would-be diners waiting to be seated are welcome to watch the family boil syrup and walk around the farm.

Davenports can be reached by turning off from Route 2 on Little Mohawk Road and following signs to the restaurant. "If people are following their GPS," cautions Lisa Davenport, "tell them not to believe it!" Apparently, GPS sys-

tems think Little Mohawk Road ends before it really does.

The climb to the farm is steep, but the view at the restaurant is worth the trip ... as is the food.

DAVENPORT MAPLE PEA BAKED BEANS

Serves 6 to 8.
 This signature dish is usually made without the salt pork since the Davenports like to have a vegetarian option for their guests.

- 1 pound Navy Pea Beans
- 1 cup dark maple syrup
- ¾ teaspoon Dijon or yellow mustard
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 apple, cored, peeled, and grated
- ½ pound salt pork (optional)

Soak the beans overnight in cold water. The next day, rinse them, place them in a pot, and pour in water until it is an inch over the top of the beans. Cook the beans for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until their skins get soft and crack. Pour them, and their water, into a 2½-quart casserole dish or slow cooker (crock pot).

If you are using the salt pork, fry it for a few minutes and then drain off the fat. Add it and all the other ingredients to the beans and mix well. The liquid should come to the top of the beans — add water if necessary.

Cover and bake at 300 degrees for 5 to 6 hours or for 10 to 12 hours in a crock pot.

Maple couscous stuffed squash

Try this vegetarian, and low-fat, take on stuffed squash.
 Serves 8

- 4 acorn squash, halved and seeded
- 1 cup apple juice
- 1 cup couscous
- ¼ cup prunes, pitted and chopped
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- ¼ cup dried apple, chopped
- ¼ cup apple juice concentrate, thawed
- ¼ teaspoon cardamom, ground
- 1 Tablespoon maple syrup
- ¼ cup pecans, toasted and chopped, optional

Steam acorn squash halves about 15 minutes, until tender.



Let drain, then place in a large

roasting pan, cavity side up. Preheat oven to 350 F.

While squash is steaming, bring apple juice to a boil in a small saucepan.

Remove from heat and stir in couscous. Cover and let sit for 15 minutes to absorb the juice.

Stir prunes, cranberries, apples, apple juice concentrate, cardamom, and maple syrup into the couscous.

Divide fruit couscous evenly between the steamed acorn squash halves. Bake for 20 minutes.

Sprinkle with pecans, if desired, before serving.

MAPLE PECAN PIE

- 1 prepared unbaked pastry shell, 9-inch
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup pure maple syrup
- ½ cup light brown sugar, packed
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1¼ cups pecan pieces or halves

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and place rack at lowest position.

In a large bowl, beat eggs. Add maple syrup, brown sugar, melted butter, and vanilla. Blend well and stir in pecans.

Pour into prepared pie shell. Bake at for 35 to 40 minutes, or until golden brown and the filling is set.

Try maple 'Snickerdoodles'

Where does this traditional New England cookie get its name? Nobody really knows ... but they're delicious!

MAPLE SNICKERDOODLES

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ½ cup margarine, softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 3 tablespoons real maple syrup
- 1 egg
- ½ cup white sugar
- ¼ cup maple sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Stir together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and cinnamon. Set aside.

In a large bowl, cream together the margarine and 1 cup of white sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg and maple syrup. Gradually blend in the dry ingredients until just mixed. In a small dish, mix together the remaining 1/2 cup white sugar and the maple sugar. Roll dough into 1 inch balls, and roll the balls in the sugar mixture. Place cookies 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets.

Bake 8 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven. Cookies will be crackly on top and look wet in the middle. Remove from cookie sheets to cool on wire racks.



File photo

Good Snickerdoodles have a slightly cracked top.